Marcel Ray Duriez

Nevaeh

Book: 73

Ethereal

Scared of My Past- Part: 1

Your times are limited, so do not waste it, living someone else's life, that is what my tombstone said along with 1991 to 2094 I have seen a century- yet stayed the age of 14 all those days after me on ending.

~Emmah~

A Golden Hour like a filter starts to deliver as I see the images before me more fervent than ever in my world, and autumn has set in and all the trees are multi mixed color, with falling and blowing leaves in the wind falling on top of Trinity Cemetery, and Haunted Woods Mausoleum and the wall of bones for the ones that past to the end of last life in this world.

-And-

Likewise, the tint to our world, more pliant, ever more radiant. Pretend a minimum with the Amount slider and

the Saturation sliders determine the general coloration vibrancy a mesmerizing touch of sunrise or sunset lighting to the images to overlook. In the sky, there are many bats, wing web flying foxes, and black crows

Over a valley of the Atrecovaria Empire and magical glowing river, swindler without A conscience a black steel A- like truss bridge passes up to and past the gothic castle, to the magical railroad.

Then past the village of Hayvannahol, line the links to Earth, going past Angel watch Memorial

Gardens, The Azazel Barrel Tavern that is suspended in the air swaying in the wind with unlikely height to it the trees and the red-orange golden enchanted river leading to its sea full of mermaids, coral reefs.

Then underneath the pillars, looking up along many cars, the steam train passing at the tippy top is moving swiftly with oncoming passengers making the journey to the other side.

Commencement-

Hope is the leader of the children with back or no eyes, on earth, you can see them in the forbidden

woods around my home, or I could when I was a child just like them at times.

'My God, you two stop you are like rabbits.' Said hope looking in on us, back when I was 14.

Nevaeh- 'I remember the first time that we had sex he put my feet and legs start-up in the air as I was on my back, and his arms were holding them tightly wrapped around, as he slid down in me for love.

But I remember when I say my grandmother give the live Naddalin a lobotomy, to cut the strings to her front

brain to the rest, a called nuts mind, over she would not conform to cities and the schooling idolized programs for a 5-year-old child, I am blessed that I walked away.

Which is about the same as having your ass reamended by your stepfather, and yes, I have that too, in the butt, not the head. Naddalin being my triplet sisters this is what I would be the same... (The minds of the normal?) They made holes in use whatever way they needed for their sick perdure or made them bigger for the enjoyments.

Like a railroad spick through the brain, I remember feeling it all until there was nothing left to feel as she was left next to dead in a way her life as over from the first hammer tap into the side of her eyeball to crack her skull and scramble her young brains like morning eggs.

‘Yet the childlike me- Nevaeh was said to be crazy to by my school and hometown.’

‘Why?’

‘Why indeed?’

My life and past reports by others in my school were nothing more than on a long shirt. Blandishment, cult, persuasion, inducement, Mafia, you get it. I remember them going balls deep in me with nothing to give me, other than the taste of dick, and I had my share of doing that too as a girl.' And I plan to take by the mop of the hair and smash their face into a pile of human shit and make them eat it like a dog.

Part:

Even as the god of the fallen angels can be afraid of her past, I am, I

am horrified. I recall I can sense it, the whole in my chest. I remember the night hang from the tree when AVA walked up yet not human at first a black crow then as the fight came closer to me it when into a yellow ball flashing lit fluttering orb first then manifested into ectoplasm and ecto-mist the shadow of a girl of hands started touching my body, all translucent until she had everything, she needed from my body to make heir's whole once more.

She moved now looking more like a see-through girl slowly to my

naked lifeless body and cut my heart out with a knife, it was still beating, in her small hand, with my blood dripping down her arm.

Yet still pupping, the flash has unwillingly taken still alive, and very much raw, she bet into it and eats more than a large bite, it still it forevermore. Therefore, I feel in the afterlife now I have known my heart to have a beat.

Ash like paper rushed out of my mouth as my head ripped back letting out the ashes of a teenage girl's sinners' life of evil pinnacle, my eyes went black rolling in my had like a hard

culmination body moment and vocal crescendo, my chest ripped open with the light of the sun brighter and hotter, as the soul lifted, out and above my hung body.

My arm bone ripped from my body, the fingertip of AVAs was cut off at that very moment awaiting in a large pot formed by my feet under me hanging and blue frames shot around me licking my body, as all my body parts were taken for her to still my life from me, so she could live forever as the dark lord goddess, not I.

And at that moment she was made, human once more as a copy of me, not to her beholding at this time I have already spilled my body and mind into parts of my twin sister thus I have found out before them that I am one of the identical triplets, and my mind is now in my dead sister's body come to life as Naddalin.

~*~

The time is altered. And I need Naddalin to feel it too. She’s not lying- seriously-her said- Not even terminating the thought before Haven leans forward, eyes darting connecting

us as she says, ‘Okay, that’s it. Just what is going on here? Thoughtfully, sufficient previously.’

I turn, regarding how her friendly yellowish aura beams in such a swift sharp distinction to the intentional tyranny of her all-black ensemble. Knowing she means no ill will though she is unmistakably disturbed by us.

‘Completely, absolutely, and undividedly It’s like you guys have some sort of creepy way of telling. Like twin speak or something. Only yours is hushed. Furthermore, more ghostly.’

I shrug and sit yonder with my lunch, going by the acts of unwrapping a sandwich, I've no plans to eat, estimated out to hide just how alarmed her mystery has made me feel.

Knocking my knee against Naddalin's, telepathically urging her to step in and handle since I've no idea what to say.

'Don't pretend it's not happening.' Her eyes narrow in suspicion. 'I've been watching you guys for a while now, and it's starting to creep me out.'

‘What’s creeping you out?’ She gazes up from her phone, but only for a moment before she is back to texting again.

‘Those two.’ Sher points to a short, black painted nail with a chunk of pink frosting stuck to its tip. ‘I swear, they get stranger every day.’

Naddalin nods, setting down her phone as she takes a moment to look us over. ‘Yeah, I’ve been meaning to mention that. You guys are weird.’ She laughs.

‘Oh, and the whole glove thing?’ She shakes her head and purses

her lips. Bestowing her hand looking all shattered with fishers and red. ‘So not striving for you, I said facetiously.’

Haven frowns, annoyed by my joke when she is trying to be grave.

‘Laugh all you want,’ she says, gaze steady, unwavering. ‘But something’s up with those two. I may not know what, but I will figure it out. I will find the underlying cause of it. You’ll see- you’ll see.’

And I am about to speak when Naddalin shakes her head and swirls her red drink, leaning toward Haven as

she says, ‘Don’t waste your time. It’s not as sinister as you think.’

She then smiles, gazes fixed on me.

‘We’re practicing telepathy powers of mind-reading, that’s all.’

‘Attempting to read each other’s minds in place of talking all the time.’

‘So, we stop getting in trouble in class over it took over the face we take over each other’s bodies and movements too at times, a real headache for the professors.’

She snorts, causing me to squeeze my sandwich so hard the mayonnaise oozes out and squirts grossly out the backside. Gaping at my significant other who has just arbitrarily decided to break our number one rule- do not tell anyone who we are or what we can do! This is something we worked hard to do, looking within the library in the restricted section of dark magic.

Calming only slightly when Haven rolls her eyes and says, ‘Please. I’m not an idiot.’

‘Wasn’t implying you were.’ Naddalin smiles. ‘It’s quite real, I assure you. Would you like to try?’

I freeze, body solid, unmoving, as though seeing a disaster on the side of the road-only the disaster is me.

‘Close your eyes and think of a number between one and ten.’ She nods, sincere gaze meeting her. ‘Focus on that number with all of you might. See it in your mind as clearly as you can, and silently repeat the sound of it repeatedly, got it?’

Sher shrugs, brows merging as though in deep concentration. Though

Choosing to concentrate on blue instead of a random number like Naddalin said.

All it takes is a glance at her aura, morphing into a dark deceitful green, and a brief peek at her thoughts to see she is only pretending.

She was holding her ground as she rubbed her chin and shakes her head, saying, I glance between them, ‘I don’t seem to be getting anything. Are you sure you’re thinking of a number between one and ten?’ Knowing she is baiting her, sure that her one in ten

chances of hitting the right number works too much in her favor.

Sher nods, deepening her focus on a beautiful shade of pulsating blue.

‘Then we must have our wires a-crossed.’ She shrugs. ‘I’m not getting a number at all.’

‘Try me!’ Emmah abandons her phone and her books, and wands and leans toward Naddalin.

Eyes barely closed, thoughts hardly focused before Naddalin gasps, ‘You’re going to Haven?’

She shakes her head also.

Part:

(A week back)

‘Three… For your data, the number was three.’ She rolls her eyes and leers. ‘And everyone knows I’m going to France. So-nice try.’

‘Everyone but me,’ Naddalin says, jaws clenched, face gone suddenly pale.

‘Well, I’m sure everyone has told you- you of all. You know, telepathically.’ she laughs, returning to her phone again, saying ‘sometimes old school kicking it is not the way to go

anymore I prefer these,' and she holds up the phone, which links all the magical networks together.

I peer at Naddalin, wondering why he is so upset over the trip. I mean, yes, so she used to live there, at one time when she was alive- after her boyfriend passed away in an industrial accident or something like that- she was vague about did not wat to say… all that much, she said she was in her late 20's.

She said something odd on her tombstone and it read- (I have not stuck with me all my whole life, so there-)

and I got what it meant. Yet it said, ‘I will live on forever…’ or something like that, or ‘I don’t need you!’ - ‘or even suck on that!’ Like- I thought that is what it may have said- but- but nah- it can’t be yet maybe?

…It is a cracked heart-shaped stone…

Part:

But- but that was hundreds of years ago, and the stone is crumbling and reading the rest has disintegrated to dust into just the wind!

I squeeze her hand, urging her to look at me, but she just stares at Haven with that same stricken look on her face.

~*~

‘Nice try with the whole telepathy angle,’ Haven says, swiping her finger a-crossed the top of her cupcake until it is coated with strawberry frosting, and she was licking her finger and kissing the end of it too.

‘But I’m afraid you’re going to have to try a little harder than that. All you have managed to prove is that you

guys are even weirder than I thought. But no worries, I will find the underlying cause of it. I'll expose your dirty little secret before long.'

I hold back a nervous laugh, hoping she is just messing around, then peering into her mind only to see that she is serious.

'When are you leaving?' Naddalin asks.

But only to appear conversational, has already uncovered the answer in her head.

‘Soon, but not soon enough,’ she thought, eyes lighting up, as she stared the look at her. ‘Let the countdown begin!’

Naddalin nods, gaze unstiffening as she says, ‘You’ll love this.

Everyone loves it, France is a lovely, delightful place.’

‘You’ve been…?’

…?...

I and Haven both ask at the same time.

Naddalin nods- ‘I’s have,’ gaze far away in the back of her on the mind and thought looking- blank to us looking at her color fading from her eyes. ‘I lived there a once-a long time ago.’

‘That’s what we gathered…’ they both said it unanimously!

Haven glances between us, eyes narrowed again when she says, ‘Jaylynn and Naddalin lived there too, around the same time, she looks at her one eyelid squinting.’

Naddalin shrugs, expression noncommittal, as though the

connection means nothing to her. She said at that moment to me that I needed to remember to 'judge quickly and love slowly.'

‘Well, don’t you deem that’s a little outlandish? All of you living there at the same time, in the same place, then all of you completing up here- within periods of each other?’

Sher leans toward her, abandoning her cupcake and letting it drop in search of some answers.

She just sips her blue drink and lifts her shoulders again, as though it is

hardly worth going into, in the past she thought, to her, in though conversation.

But Naddalin's solid, refusing to cave or do anything that might give it away.

'Is there anything I should see while I'm there?' Haven asks, more to break the tension than anything else. 'Anything that shouldn't be missed?'

Naddalin squints, pretending to think, even though the answer comes quickly.

~*~

‘All of France is worth seeing… yes is it not?’

But you should check out the Ponte Vecchio, which is the first bridge to cross the Arno River and the only one left standing after the war where every inch of Frances was covered in their blood.

Oh, and we must visit the Galleria dell’ Accademia which houses Michelangelo’s David among other important works, and perhaps the-’

‘Definitely hitting David,’ Emmah says wanting this so badly.

‘We… yes we’re taking you to a girl- surprise!’

‘We did not want to tell you.’

‘As well as the bridge, and the important II Duomo, and all the other items that make every travel guide top ten lists, but I am more absorbed in the smaller, off-the-beaten-path kind of places- you know, where all the cool Florentines go.

Naddalin was raving about the one place, I forget the name, but it is supposed to house some incomprehensible revitalization

artifacts, paintings, and stuff few people know about.

Did you get anything like that? Or even clubs, shopping, that kind of thing?'

Naddalin looks at her, gaze so intense it sends a chill down my spine.

'Nothing offhand,' she says, trying to soften the look though her voice betrays a definite edge.

'Though any place that claims to house great art but isn't in the guidebook is probably a fake. The

antiquities market is loaded with forgeries.

You shouldn’t waste your time on that when there are so many other, far more interesting things to see.’

Haven shrugs, bored by the conversation, and already back to texting again. ‘Whatever,’ she mumbles, thumbs tapping quickly. ‘No worries. Naddalin said she’d make me a list.’

(Back home)

‘I’m amazed by the progress you’ve made- Dariez.’ Naddalin smiles. ‘You learned all on your own?’

She nods, and gazing around the small, empty room, pleased with me for the first time in weeks, when I walked into the tiny house.

The moment Naddalin mentioned she wanted to rid the place of all the overly slippery furniture, that was cheap she had filled it with during Naddalin’s reign of fear, I was on it, to make this place fit for too young lady’s- all cute and such.

Aiming at each piece with such unchecked enthusiasm that-well-I am not even sure where it went. All I know is it is no longer there I want to be-and she points at the old home she was half-grown in- and you were right.

‘Looks like you’re no longer in need of my lessons. She shakes her head, saying you wring I need you more now than ever.’

‘Don’t be so sure.’ I said back quickly.

I turn, smiling as I push her dark wavy hair off her face with my newly gloved hand, hoping we will get

that cure from Naddalin soon, or at least produce a less hokey alternative. Dariez is a good kid… you will do fine.

‘I have no idea where all this stuff even went-not to mentioned, how I can’t possibly fill up space, even more, when I have no clue where I am stashing all the stuff you used to have and me before getting all this.’

Reaching for her hand a second too late and frowning as she walks over to the window- I feel as if I have lost my sister.

‘The furniture’-her gazes out at her manicured lawn, voice low and

deep-’is right back where it started, what seemed like forever ago, yet was only about a year.

‘I don’t like change-’ she said- out of breath.

Returned to its original state of pure vibrating energy with the potential to become anything at all. She looks in the glass ball- and sees her new life coming.

And as for the rest-’ She shrugs, the strong lines of her shoulders rising ever so slightly before settling again. ‘Well, it hardly matters anymore, does it? I do not need it now.’

‘I don’t like change-’ she said- out of breath.

Returned to its original state of pure vibrating energy with the potential to become anything at all. She looks in the glass ball- and sees her new life coming.

And as for the rest-’ Her shrugs, the strong lines of her shoulders rising ever so slightly before settling again. ‘Well, it hardly matters anymore, does it? I do not need it now.’

I stare at her back, taking in her lean form, her casual stance. Doubting how she could be so-o blasé

in reclaiming the precious artifacts of her past…

The pictures of her in plain pink dresses back in the day, the astride a rearing white stallion-not to mention all the other amazing relics dating back centuries...

‘Nonetheless, those objects are priceless, see her life now within mine forever! You must get them back, don’t you? They can never be replaced, yet you can with new lives, can’t you?’

‘It’s all energy!’ She squeals.

~*~

‘Ever so, relax. It’s just stuff.’ Her voice is firm, resigned, as she turns toward me again. ‘None of it has any real meaning. The only thing that means anything is you.’

-And-

Even though the sentiment is undeniably sweet and heartfelt, it does not affect me in the way that it should.

The only thing she seems to care about these days is apologizing for her karma and me. ‘But that’s where you’re wrong. It’s not just stuff- too.’

Oh, I am sorry, I felt so bad hugging her from one side.

-And-

While I am perfectly fine with those inhabiting the number one and two spots on her list, the problem is the rest of the page is blank.

I move toward her, voice wiles, wheedling, hoping to reach her and make her listen the time.

-And-

Just like that, my mind is ripped into another time and place…

(Back into a week into the trip)

It is history for God’s sake, we need to get books and have them signed, it was said this man write 30 books in one year, yet I am not sure if she was still alive! I so he would be over 90 now…

‘Like, you cannot just shrug it off as though it is nothing more than a box of old tired books, of tired old objects you donate to Goodwill…’

‘I thought they were worth remembering- like the one about a would be lost without color or feeling, or the one about a girl that fought for

her place, as an equal- the youngest over her class.’

Look at this thing, the covers are all tattered, and the pages small.

She then looks at me, gazes softening as she trails the tip of her gloved finger from my temple to my chin. ‘I thought you hated my ‘dusty old room’ as you once called it.’

Look at this thing, the covers are all tattered, and the pages small.

She then looks at me, gazes softening as she trails the tip of her gloved finger from my temple to my

chin. ‘I thought you hated my ‘dusty old room’ as you once called it.’

‘People change, and so did I.’ I shrug, thank you for that asking why?

Wishing, not for the first time, that she would change back to the Naddalin I knew before she was her...

‘And speaking of change, why are you so freaked by my ’s trip to France?’

Noting the way, she hardens at the mere mention of the word.

‘Is it because of the whole Haven and Nevaeh- become Naddalin

thing of remembering the past- and not wanting to, and then gave that up to Karly? Why? The connection you don't want her to know about?'

Yet were there the good times- I do not know…? She thought…

She looks at me for a moment, lips parting, about to speak, then she turns away and mumbles insanely, 'I'm hardly what you'd call freaked.'

'You know what…?

You are right.

For a normal person, that was hardly what you would call freaked.

But for the girl who is always the coolest, calmest one in the room-all it takes is the slight narrowing of your eyes and the most minute clenching of your jaw to know you're upset.'

She sighs, eyes searching mine as she moves toward me again. 'You saw what happened in France.' She then squints. 'Despite all its virtues, it's also a place of unbearable memories, ones I'd rather not explore.'

I swallow hard shaking looking into her past- like a faded movie, remembering the images with her, I

viewed in looking deep into her memories…

Then lost in her mind, ‘like a penny on the floor… worthless- my depression a sickness that keeps me, spring-like atop- my mind turning, my curse- or just my illusion?

Until my death, until we part for better or for worse- locked in your heart-shaped box forever, I thought or was thinking nothing but decillions, what little time we spent lost in my mind forever- whatever never mind.’

-Naddalin is hiding in a small dark cupboard, watching as her parent

was murdered, seeing it along with me, she and I shared recalling the moment, back when she was in her playpen.

By thugs' intent on obtaining the elixir-then later, abused as a ward of the church until the Black Plague Covid-19 swept through France and she encouraged Haven and the rest of the orphans to drink the immortal juice, hoping only to heal and having no idea it would grant eternal life-and I cannot help but feel like the world's worst girlfriend for bringing it up.

'I prefer to focus on the present.' She nods, gesturing around

the large empty room. ‘And right now, I need your help furnishing the space. I am starting to like a nice, clean, contemporary look when shopping for home decor.

-And-

Though I was thinking of leaving it more than empty, to emphasize the size of the rooms- that well varies tiny, I suppose we should try-’ I gasp, practically choking on the word as my voice raises several octaves at the end, think that these girls in now a woman!

‘I’m selling the house- in a year and moving on with my life.’ She shrugs.

‘I thought you would understand?’

But- you can your one of us now…

I gaze around, longing for that ancient velvet sofa with the lumpy cushions…

Then at that moment, knowing it would give the perfect landing for when my body with I am so tired I collapse and my head quietly explodes,

for all the chatter- that it must here and there are no ways of turning them off...

-And-

They just keep babbling in my mind. I need to have a real-life with real- real- you like all things that are real- like real friends too, not just the fantasy world that you refuse to see that is not a reality.

‘Don’t look so upset.’

'Nothing’s changed It’s just a house. A seriously under the oversized house, I need to move on from.'

-And-

Likewise, just like that she was gone and said OKAY if that is what you want Dariez… and Naddalin vanished right before her eyes.

Nonetheless, I just stood there instead, determined to keep it together. Gazing at my ridiculously gorgeous girlfriend of the last years as though it was the first time we had met.

Besides, I have needed all the space anyway, I have a new boyfriend, as you may or may not know me and Stan are going to have a baby. they’re never going to be enough rooms or rooms for three.’

‘And what exactly are you planning to replace it with, then? …A tent?’

‘I just thought I’d move in with him, that’s all.’ Her gaze is pleading, begging me to understand, I did yet I thought she was throwing her new life away that I got for her, ‘Nothing sinister, Ever- yet a way of what could be power- and taking my place someday- ever one said the next. ‘Nothing meant to hurt you, but I don’t want it.’

I did not say- yet I thought you are stuck with regardless, you are

hexed, and at that point, I was out of her mind- for good- yet them- they were in it forever, and I was not going to stop it now.

I was studying her closely, wondering what has gotten into her, wanting to just say it was all over, and where they will end up without her- yet she said to me- he is looking for innocents and he has found it- so-o go-o.

‘I mean, Naddalin, if you’re seriously looking for a fight, I don’t want it, why not just manifest

something in your crazy head about how wrong I am and can go on?

I flick my gaze over her, moving from her glorious heard of longish dark glossy hair to her perfect rubber flip-flop–shod feet, remembering how, not so long ago, I longed to be normal again, just like everyone else. But now that I am getting used to my powers, I do not see the point.

‘What’s this really about- I thought?’ I squint, feeling more than a little betrayed.’

‘I mean, you’re the one who got me here.’ Oh, I was- mortified.

You are the one who made me the way- I am.

Right- needed that I am finally adjusted, you decide to jump ship?

‘Seriously! Why are you doing?’

But instead of answering, they just close their eyes.

Projecting an image of the two of us laughing and happy, frolicking on a beautiful, black-sand beach- remember all the good times. Saying this is it… thanks for the memories. But I just shake my head and cross my arms tighter, refusing to play until my

questions are answered, about her and them…

She sighs and stares out the window of the tiny home for the last time looking back at me with the sun shining brightly, then turning toward me when she says, ‘I’ve already told you, my only recourse, my only way out of the hell making- as I should have, it all karma- and I want what I lost.

And the only way to do that is to relinquish the manifesting, the high life, the big-spending, and all the other extravagances- I have indulged myself in for the last hundred years so I can

live the life of an ordinary citizen, too. I understand, honest, hardworking, and humble, with the same day-to-day struggles as anyone else- if not more- go for it.’

Intermission-

Part:

I stare at her, replaying her words in my head, hardly believing what I just heard. ‘And how exactly are you planning to do that?’ I squint. ‘Seriously. In your one century of living, have you ever even held a real job?’

But even though I am dead sober and not at all joking, she throws her head back and laughs like I was.

Eventually calming down enough to say, ‘You reliably think no one will hire me?’

‘I could have had a job if I wanted to but, back home how- and when could I have- you’re working for a town that thinks your less then they, in every way you could think of, the kids you work with don’t like you and their dad that is now your boss thinks you’re a waste of life; so, get a job- yah-right.’

She shakes her head and laughs even harder. ‘Forever, please. Don’t you think I’ve been around long enough to have improved a few skills?’

~*~

I start to respond, wanting to explain that while it is truly remarkable

to watch her paint, better than Picasso with one hand while at the same time outdoing Van Gogh with the other by cutting… I do not think that will help her land that coveted barista position at the Starbucks on the corner, yet something about girls well never changes, just like every girl has that one boy that is her bitch, and I get that I had mine and she now has hers… so-o-o!

Nonetheless, before I can say it, she is standing beside me, moving with such speed and grace all I can manage is, ‘Well, for someone who’s

turned her back on her gifts, you still move fast, for a girl that doesn’t want to see any more of her past even if it is showing in the painting.’

Aware of that warm wonderful tingle swarming- turning and swimming like within my skin as she slips her arms around my waist and pulls me close to her chest, carefully circumventing skin-on-skin contact, yet it could not be helped.

-And-

‘Besides what about telepathy?’

I murmur.

Thinking- Your mind spends about 70% of its time replaying memories and creating scenarios of perfect moments. Waiting- like painting- is linked to depression, at times- and shows within the picture.

Time spent waiting for something that may never happen is mentally painful. The best feeling in the world is knowing that you mean something to someone. This can add years to your life.

Sometimes good people make bad choices. It does not mean they are

bad people; it means they are human. Yet we are not human.

Then the talking started up-

‘Are you planning to ditch that too- for your BITCH?’

So, overcome by her juxtaposition, I can barely eke out the words.

‘I’ve no plans to ditch anything that brings me closer to you,’ she says, gaze on mine, steady and still.

‘As for the rest-’ SHE- shrugs, glancing around the large space before finding me again. And ‘tell me, what

matters more, NEVER- Ever? The size of my house or house-or the size of my heart?’

I bite my lip and advert my gaze, the truth of her words left leaving me feeling small and ashamed- like first-time sex- when your 13 and can now consent.

I swallow hard, focusing on anything but her, thinking back on my life and all the flashbacks that come.

It is not that I care about her past, I mean, if I want those things then fine, I will just clear them myself. An instant mood change from happy to sad

usually indicates that you are missing someone, I have noticed…

Even so then again even though they are not important- THERE LIKE- JUST- moments lost in time, if I am going, to be honest, then I must admit they were part of the preliminary attraction-adding to her sleek, shiny, mysterious persona, that lured me in right away.

Then when I finally am held at her again, standing before me, stripped bare of all the usual dazzle and flash, honed down to the very essence of who SHE is, I realize she is still the same,

warm, wonderful girl that she has been all along.

Which just proves her point even more. None of that other stuff matters. None of it has anything to do with her soul at all.

I smile, suddenly remembering the one place where we can be together-safe and secure and protected from harm.

Reaching for her gloved hand as I grasp it in mine, saying, ‘Come on, I want to show you something,’ and pulling her along.

At first, I was concerned she would refuse to visit a place that not only requires a certain amount of magic for entry, but that is nothing but magic once you arrive.

Formerly just after landing in that vast sweet-smelling field, she wipes the BUTT of her jeans and offers her hand, gazing all around as SHE says, ‘Wow, I don’t think I was ever able to make the portal so-o quickly.’

‘Please, you’re the one who taught me.’

I smile, gazing at the meadow of pulsating flowers and shivering

trees, noting how everything here is reduced to its absolute purest form of beauty and energy.

I tilt my head back, closing my eyes against the warm hazy glow that she makes with me within the shimmering mist of the day.

Remembering the last time, I was here, how I danced with a manifest Naddalin in the very same field, delaying the moment when I would have to let go.

~*~

‘So, you’re okay with being here?’ I ask, unsure just how far she bans on magic outspreads. ‘You’re not mad?’ I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT SHE IS comfortable!

She then shakes her head and takes my hand.

‘I never grow tired of seeing THIS world WITH ITS UNWORLDLY COLORS AND CREATURES.’

It’s a display of loveliness and potential in its unadulterated form.’

We make our way through the pasture, sustained by the grass just

under our feet as our fingers graze the tops of golden wildflowers, that bend and sway alongside us.

Knowing anything is possible in a wonderful place, anything at all, including-just maybe-us.

‘I missed the… everything…’

She leers, gazing all around…

‘Not that I reminisce about the last few weeks without it, even still, it seems like such a long time since we were last here- just like this.’

‘It felt strange coming without you,’ I say, leading her toward a

beautiful Balinese-style bathhouse balanced beside the blue-green tinted stream.

‘Though I did discover a whole other side I can’t wait to show you. Only later-not now.’

I push the gossamer pink fabric aside and plop onto the soft white cushions, smiling as Naddalin lands right beside me, the two of us lying side by side, gazing up at the decoratively carved coconut beams.

Heads together, the soles of our feet just a few inches shy-the result of my elixir-fueled growth spurt.

‘What is the…?’

She turns onto her side…

‘Why is when having love when you have voices in your head from others lingering in your mind is about the same as having the feeling that you did when your daddy and everyone was in the room looking at you are taking your first poop, and then start applauding for you after the fact of witnessing?’ She spoke.

And then I draw the curtains closer with my mind to me and her. Keen to shut out all those environs she

and I, so-o we can enjoy our own private space that is never private.

‘I saw one on the cover of a travel magazine featuring some exotic resort, and I liked it so much I thought I would appear one. You know, so we could hang out-and-stuff.’

I prevent my gaze, heart racing, face blushing, knowing I am quite possibly the most pathetic seducer she has met in her one hundred years. The world was blazing like fiery tornadoes and the birds in a mass flock like a dark wicked omen of what to come.

Nonetheless, she just giggles, pulling me so close we just nearly touch.

Separated only by the slimmest veil of shimmering energy, a pulsating screen that hovers between us- allowing us to be near without harming each other.

I close my eyes, surrendering to the wave of warmth and tingle as our bodies come together. Two hearts pumping in perfect unison, reaching, and retreating, expanding, and retracting, the tempo perfectly synchronized as though beating as one.

Everything about it feels so good, so natural, so right, I snuggle closer. Nestling my face in the hollow where her shoulder meets her neck, longing to taste her sweet skin and inhale her warm perfumed scent.

A low moan absconding from deep in her throat as I close my eyes and press into her hips, my tongue tipped toward her skin, only to have her spring from my reach so fast I am met with a mouthful of the cushion.

I scrambled upright, seeing her move so quickly she is reduced to a blur. Stopping only when she is safely

ensconced on the other side of the curtain, eyes blazing, body trembling, as I beg her to tell me what occurred.

I move near her, wanting to aid them.

But then again, just as I get close, she moves, yet, again handheld before her, observation cautioning me away.

‘Don’t touch me,’ she says. ‘Please, stay right where you are. Don’t come any closer.’

‘But-why?’

My voice is hoarse, uneven, hands trembling by my side as if I were feeling my old, ways and old life- AS it was when I was getting older- not a young girl any longer.

‘Did I do something where I was mistaken in doing so?

I just thought-well-since we’re here-and since nothing bad can happen-I just thought it would be okay-if we maybe tried to- re-kindle in reconciliations.’

‘Never- Ever, it’s not that-it’s-’ she shakes her head, her eyes darker

than I have ever seen them- for being sky blue.

So dark the irises are indistinguishable from the pupils, blending right in. ‘And who says nothing bad can happen here?’ Her tone is so edgy, her gaze so harsh, it is clear she is travelling an exceptionally long way from her usual state of infallible calm.

I swallow hard and stare at the ground, feeling foolish, ridiculous-to think I was so desperate to be with my girlfriend, I risked taking her life- if I do- if they know- if they...

-And-

‘I just assumed…’

‘I’m sorry.’

My voice fades, knowing very well what happens when one assumes. I don’t know what to say.’ Not only do you make an ass out of you and me, but in that case, that very same you just might end up dead for the final time with no more lives given to you.

‘I-I guess that- I didn’t think it through and then I shake my head, knowing it’s completely insufficient

considering the life-and-death circumstances we’re in.

I mean, if we are not safe here, then where? I pull my shoulders in, wrapping my arms around my waist, trying to make myself smaller, so small I will disappear from her sight.

-And-

Although, I cannot help but wonder precisely what kind of sad thing could happen in a place where magic comes easily, and wounds are healed promptly.

Naddalin looks at me, answering the thought in my head when she says, ‘School contains the possibility of all things. So far, we have only understood something clearly at last, but who is to say there is not a dark side? Maybe it’s not at all what we think.’

I gaze at her, remembering when I first met Neville and Rayne and how they said something similar. Watching as she manifests a beautifully carved wood bench, then motions for me to sit.

‘Come,’ she nods, urging me toward her as I take a seat at the far end, not wanting to get too close and risk setting her off again.

‘There’s something you need to see something you need to register. So please just close your eyes and unblock your brain of any random ideas and clutter as best you can. Putting yourself open and sensitive to any visions I express. The container you do that?’

I nod…

My eyes shut tight…

I was doing my best to sweep my mind of such thoughts as What is going on I thought and thought more pondering? Is she mad at me- or just mad?

Unquestionably, she is mad at me- I know it!

How could I be so stupid? But how mad is she beyond? Is it possible to change her mind and start over again? My usual paranoid play-list is set on permanent repeat.

But even after clearing it out and waiting for what feels like a reasonable amount of time, all I have

gotten so far is a heavy void of dense solid black.

‘I don’t get it,’ I say, opening one eye, and peeking at her.

Nonetheless, she just shakes her head, eyes shut tight, brows merged in concentration, as she endures to focus with all her might.

‘Listen,’ she says at once.

‘And look deep down inside.’

‘Just close your eyes and obtain.’

I take a deep breath and try again, but still, all I get is a foreboding silence and the feeling of black space.

While waiting for-

I am sucked into a black hole, limbs flailing, unable to stop or slow down. Free-falling into the darkness, my horrible high-pitched scream is the only sound.

-And-

Just as I am sure that fall has no end-it stops. The shriek. The fall. It… all.

Everything…

Leaving me to hang there, released, and suspended. Completely alone in a solitary place with no beginning or end.

Lost in the dark and dismal abyss with no trace of light coming in. Abandoned in the infinite void, a lost and lonely world of permanent midnight. The horrifying comprehension slowly dawned on me- this is where I live now.

A hell with no escape…!

-Then-

I try to run, scream, cry for help but it is no use.

I am frozen, paralyzed, unable to speak completely alone for all of infinity.

Expressly held apart from everything I know and love-cut off from everything that exists.

Knowing I’ve no choice but to surrender as my mind goes blank and my body limps.

There is no use in fighting when no one can save me.

I stay like that, solitary, eternal, a shadowy awareness creeping upon me, tugging from a place just outside of my reach-

‘Till-

Pending-

I am tugged out of that hell and into Naddalin’s arms, relieved to see her beautiful, anxious face hovering over me.

‘I’m so sorry I thought I’d lost you-I thought you’d never come back!’ She cries, holding me tight, her voice like a sob in my ear.

I cling to her, body shaking, her art racing, clothes drenched with sweat. Never having felt so isolated before-so disconnected-from everything. From every-living-thing. Hugging her tighter, unwilling to let go, my mind connected with her, asking why she chose to put me through that.

She pulls away, cupping my face in her hands as her eyes search mine. ‘I’m sorry. I was not trying to punish you, or harm you in any way. I only wanted to show you something, something you needed to experience firsthand to understand.’

I nod, not trusting my voice. Still shaken from an experience so awful it felt like the death of my soul.

‘My God!’ Her eyes widened. ‘That’s it! That is exactly what it is. The soul ceases to exist!’

‘I don’t understand,’ I say, voice hoarse, shaky. ‘What was that horrible place?’

She looks away, fingers squeezing mine when she says, ‘The future, the eternal abyss I’d thought was meant only for me that I’d hoped was meant only for me…’ She closes her eyes and shakes her head hard.

‘But now I know better. Now I know that if you are not careful, extremely careful-you’ll go there too.’

I look at her, starting to speak, but she cuts me off before I can get to the words. ‘The past few days I’ve been getting these flashers-glimpses, really-of various moments from my past-both distant and near.’ She looks at me, carefully searching my face.

‘But the moment we came here-’ Her gestures around. ‘It started trickling back, slowly at first until it all came surging forth, including the moments I was under Nevaeh’s control.

I was also dismissed from my death. Those few brief seconds after you broke within the circle before you had me drink the antidote, as you know, I was dying. I watched my entire life shoot before me, a hundred years of unchecked vanity, narcissism, selfishness, and greed.

Like a continuous reel of all my accomplishments, every misdeed that I had done-accompanied by the meaning I had-the reasoning and natural effect of my violation of others.

And though there were a few decent acts here and there, the

majority, well, it amounted to centuries of me focusing on nothing but my self-interest, giving extraordinarily little thought to anything or anyone else. Focusing solely on the physical world to the detriment of my soul. Leaving me no doubt I was right all along, my karma to blame for what we're going through now.'

She shakes her head and meets my gaze with such unflinching honesty I want to reach out and touch her, hold her, tell her it will all be okay. But instead, I stay put, sensing there is more, and it is about to get worse.

‘Then, now of my death, instead of coming here-’ Her voice cracks but she forces herself to continue. ‘I-I went to a place the exact opposite of the.

A place so dark and cold it is more like a home than I wanted it to be or thought it could be. Experiencing the same thing you just did. Solitary, suspended, alone-left to stay that way for all of eternity.’

She looks at me, willing me to understand.

‘It was exactly like you felt. It was as though I was isolated, soulless-

with no connection to anything or anyone else.’

I stare into her eyes, an ominous chill blanketing my skin, never having seen her so tired, so jaded, so regretful before.

‘Furthermore, now I appreciate the very thing that’s avoided me all these years.’

I stretch my knees to my bosom, shielding personally from whatever befalls nearby.

‘Only our physical bodies are immortal. Our souls are most unquestionably not.’

I avert my gaze, unable to look at her, unable to move.

‘The is the prospect you’re suffering. The one I’ve invested you, if, God prevent, anything should appear, that signifies.’

My fingers instinctively fly to my throat, remembering what Nevaeh said about my compromised chakra, my lack of discernment and weakness, wondering if there is some way to guard it.

‘Exactly how can you be assured?’ I watch her as though caught in a dream, some horrible nightmare with no way to avoid it.

‘I propose, there’s an immeasurable gamble you’re wrong considering this occurred so fast. Accordingly, that was just a temporary state. You know, as I realized you back to life so ready you didn’t have time to make the trip hereabouts.’

She shakes her head, her gaze meeting mine when she says, ‘tell me, Ever, what did you see when you died? How did you spend those few moments

between the time when your soul left your body and I returned you to life?'

I swallow hard and look away, gazing at the trees, the flowers, the clear stream flowing nearby remembering that day I found myself in the very same field.

So, taken by its heady fragrance, its shimmering mist, the all-encompassing feel of unconditional love, I was tempted to linger forever, never wanting to leave.

'The idea you didn't see the depths is that you were still precarious. You ought to die a mortal's death.

Notwithstanding, the moment I had you drink from the compound, awarding you eternal season, everything altered. Instead of immortality in School or the place beyond the bridge- suited your predetermination.'

She swings her head and watches endlessly, so strongly mired in her special world of regret I am nervous I will never more touch her again.

Simply just as quickly her eyes push mine meanwhile, she answers,

‘We can exist an infinity in the earth sphere, you and I collectively.

Although if something should result if one of us should die.’

She rocks her head. ‘The depth is where we’ll go, and we’ll nevermore see each other again.’

I start to speak, desperate to refute it, tell her here is wrong, but I cannot. It is of no use. All I must do is look in her eyes to see the truth.

‘And as much as I believe in the powerful heralding magic of the place- just look at the way it heralded my

memory-’ she shrugs and shakes her head.

‘I can’t afford to give in, no matter how safe my desire for you may seem. It is too risky. Besides we’ve no impervious it will be any different here than on the earth plane. It is a gamble I cannot afford to take. Not when I need to do everything I can to keep you safe.’

‘Keep me innocuous?’

I gape hard. ‘You’re the one who needs saving! It is my fault all the happened in the first place! If I hadn’t.’

‘Always, please,’ she says, voice harsh, willing me to listen.

‘You’re in no way to blame. When I think about the way I’ve lived- the things I’ve done-’ She shakes her head. ‘I deserve nothing better, and if there was any inquiry that my karma was to blame, well, it ends here.

I have spent the better part of hundred years devoting myself to physical pleasure and neglecting my soul-and this is the result-the wake-up call, and inopportunely, I have dragged you along.

So-o makes no mistake, my concern is for you, and you are only. You are my only priority. My life is only important in that I stay well long enough to protect you from them and whoever else she might hurt. And that means we can never be together. Never. It's a risk we can't take.'

I turn toward the stream, a thousand thoughts storming my brain. Besides, even though I heard everything she just said, even though I qualified the gorge for myself, I still would not change what I am.

'And the other orphans?'

I whisper, remembering how I counted seven, including Naddalin at one point. ‘What happened to them? Do you know if they turned evil like Lily and Haven?’

‘Haven is not evil.’

‘So, what is the problem in their thinking with us, they believe... they believe in the stories like they do Santa; and they expect gifts, and when they do not get anything, they pout when they want us to be gifted.’

‘Nevaeh that’s another question.’

Naddalin shrugs, rising from the bench and pacing before me. ‘I always assumed they were too old and feeble by now to ever pose a real threat.

That is what happens after the first one hundred years-you age- some yet slower than the rest. And the only way to reverse the process is to drink the tonic again if you want an and end.

Haven amassed it while we were dating and slipped it to Naddalin who eventually learned how to make her own and then passed it to the other.’ She then shakes her head more.

‘So that’s where Haven is now,’ I whimper, overwhelm with repentance when I realize the truth. No matter how sinful she was, she did not deserve that. Nobody does. ‘I sent her here-and-nowhere- furthermore now she’s-’ I swing my head, unable to terminate.

‘It wasn’t you who did it, it was me.’

She fills the space beside me, sitting so close there is only a fragment of vitality throbbing separating us.

‘The second I made her an everlasting; I sealed her fate.’

I was not sure she wanted it or not, yet it was for the best I conceived and my self-indulgence.

‘Just like I did yours.’

I swallow hard, reassured by her warmth along with her wanting to assure me that I am truly not responsible for sending my number-one enemy through all my lives straight into that hell.

‘I’m so sorry,’ she mutters, contemplates full of repentance.

‘I’m mournful I involved you in either of them. I should have become

left lonely should have stepped a long time ago. You would have done so much better off if you'd never met me.'

I shake my head, unwilling to even visit that place, it is far too late for looking back or second-guessing. 'But if we're destined to be together then maybe the is our fate.' Knowing her stays unconvinced the second I read her countenance.

'Or maybe I've forced something that was never meant to be.' She frowns and looks down. 'Did you ever think of that?'

I glance away, carrying in the encompassing beauty, apprehending words simply can never- ever modify any of the only actions that can assist; and fortunate for us, I know just where to start.

I stand, pulling her up alongside me as I say, ‘Come on. We don’t need Haven- don’t need anyone- I do know just the place!’

We head for the Myriad Halls of Learning… Stopping just bashful of its abrupt chalcedony steps as I peer at her, querying (enthusiastic!) she can

see what I see the ever-changing façade that is needed for entrance.

‘Consequently, you did find it,’ she tells, speech tinged with reverence as we observe the swirling collection of the most divine and wonderful countries on Earth.

The Great Pyramids of Giza, the Taj Mahal morphing into the Parthenon, which turns into the Lotus temple, which displays and so on.

Our common declaration of its excellence and shock allowed us toward the grand marble hall overlaid with

elaborately sculpted columns straight out of ancient Greek times.